PERCY

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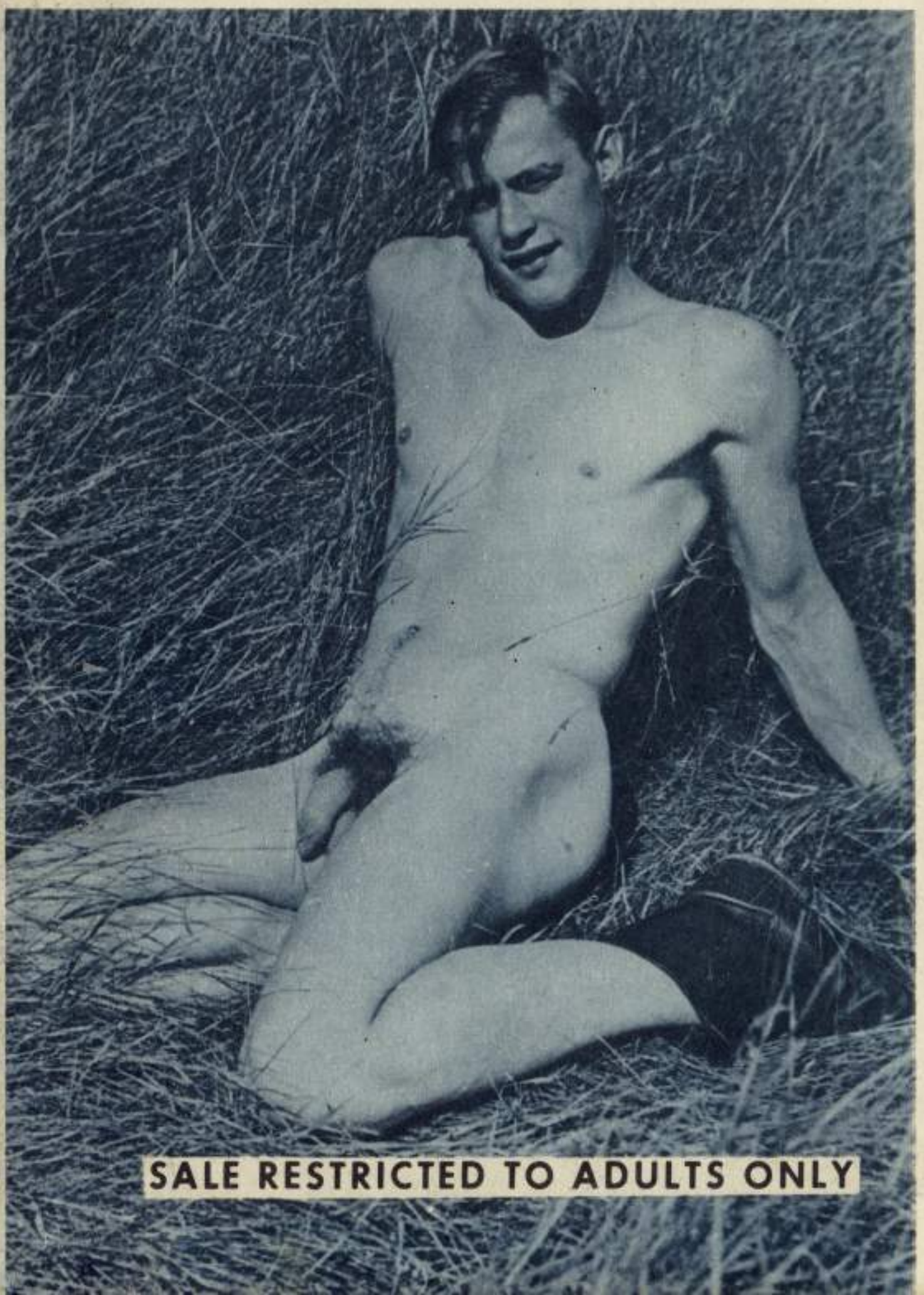

PERCY

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PERCY is the international male art magazine. It is dedicated to the futherance of realism in art, photography, and literature – without idealization of the beautiful or avoidance of the ugly. • *The photography, art, and articles contained in PERCY are offered to illuminate the conviction that the body of man is clean and wholesome and that there can be no obscenity in God's handiwork.* • *It is our belief that the ability of man to be at one with himself, to have a high opinion of the portions of his body so long rejected and degraded, will make him stronger, not weaker; more moral instead of less moral. We hope to do our part to bring about a world wherein man will, from the moment of birth, accept himself – not with guilt and shame; but with esteem and serenity – in his totality.*

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CLEAN OR OBSCENE?

By JANE HATHAWAY

SIMPLY PUT, THE WORD 'obscene' means revolting. And the first things that come to mind are the acts of violence—murder, mutilation, rape, torture. If one thing in life is revolting, it's physical assault on another person.

The great Spanish painter, Francesco de Goya, once painted a terribly frightening sight—*Saturn Eating His Children.* An awesome yet stupid-looking beast of a man holding the headless carcass of a bloody child. Nothing could be more obscene, yet the painting is obscene because of what it's saying to you, not what it is. It says in banner headlines: MAN IS VILE. So you become ashamed at your own membership in this greedy, violent race of beings. But that was one man's opinion of the whole human species. Solitary, deaf, ravished by syphilis, that is what Goya felt. He put down on canvas what he thought of his fellow men. Obscene, but no one would dream of censorship. He portrayed an idea and none opposed (censored) his opinion.

However, treasures of the past have been lost to us thanks to book-burners and zealots of every description, with every kind of possible motive. Most of Sappho's Grecian love poetry, poetry addressed to both men and women, was burnt by the early Christians, and only a few lines remain. Yet some modern critics state flatly that she was the greatest poet that ever lived.

John Ruskin, a Puritanical English philosopher who thought himself a great judge of art, was entrusted with the oils of the greatest of all British painters, Turner. He burnt them! Why? Because he considered them obscene. But who was he to judge? In the year 3,000, Turner's landscapes will still hang in the great museums of the world, though his nudes were burnt a hundred years ago. And Ruskin and all his writings will fade into oblivion, just as did his Victorian Puritanism. The pages and pages of clutter which John Ruskin wrote will moulder away on unused shelves. No one would bother to burn them.

So it's a matter of opinion. There always have been, and always will be, those who say "If you don't agree with me, I'll turn you into cole slaw." And for a hundred different 'good' reasons. When the law of the land

stands behind such people, self or publicly appointed, they are *censors* — opinion controllers. Then there's trouble!

What is obscene to some people, is clean to others.

Many times courts have stated or admitted that the filth is in the mind of the reader, not on the printed page. They have also ruled that any words spoken in common speech may be written down on the printed page. No one can dictate good taste, even define it. At least, everybody wants things to be done tastefully, and the only common-sense road to common-sense literature, is to allow the writer, and the reader, perfect freedom of artistic choice. Not only should there be freedom to write, but freedom to read.

The recent book *Candy* is a very funny book. A young, 'innocent' and beautiful bizarre blonde gets into every bizarre situation you can imagine. In one way it's obscene, in another it's clean. An ignorant person reads some of it and says to himself "Another filthy book!" A well-educated reader may see it as impossibly funny, as a spoof against pornography, and in particular as a big spoof against American morals—hypocricy. *Candy* runs through all sorts of taboos in rapid-fire

order—right down to incest, but when the blonde nymphomaniac finally realizes it's her father, she yells "Good grief, it's Daddy!" And of course, that line reminds one of the comic strip *Peanuts*. And so it's all in how *you* see it.

No man is an island unto himself and there's a little bit of everything in each of us. It's the balance of hopes and desires, teachings, failings, heaven and earth that makes up this thing we call the present—all of our notions and the environment. It's the rich mixture of sights and smells and sounds that makes life interesting. When it comes to music you don't like, then don't listen — art, don't look—literature, don't read. But don't stop the other fellow from listening, looking and reading—searching for the things which interest him. You can ask him not to look and listen, but can anyone really forbid him his interests?

And it goes far deeper than that. Suppose the forbidden fruit was political. Then it is obvious there may be any number of opinions. Goya's painting was non-sexual—therefore was never banned. Well, suppose certain literature is sexual, that is erotic—this is just another struggle of opinions. Whether ideas

are presented as words or as pictures, they are really opinions. Certain people hold certain beliefs; and they have that right. This freedom of choice is usually respected, but not often when sex is involved.

When any publication is banned — censored—then an opinion has been banned, albeit a minority-held concept, but still an opinion. The democratic view of life is that, regardless of their differences, all shall be able to live together. The idea that all should think and act the same way is totalitarian—by definition! One opinion may be better than another—but in *whose* definition? How do you judge?

Turner displayed the "pudenda," the genital organs of women in his paintings. No man on earth would dare to criticize that genius today. Yet in Ruskin's opinion of those real-life scenes along the London docks should have been burnt. And *he* burnt them! Perhaps those who want to knock the pleasure out of the lives of others, have no pleasure in life themselves. Ruskin's secret? Yes, he was totally impotent all his life.

The right of free self-expression was formalized long ago in the U.S. Constitution, the right of freedom of speech. And that

means freedom to read as you choose, as well as write as you wish. What may appear obscene to one person, may not to another. The supreme law of the land, the Constitution, is there to protect one man from another in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

After all, freedom of speech is just another facet of the Golden Rule, do unto others as you yourself would have them do unto you.